Implementing the “Five Day Study Plan”

The number of days in your test preparation study plan depends on the number of main topics you will be responsible for knowing. A five-day plan (which incorporates 10-12 hours of spaced studying) is generally appropriate for a regular test in a three-credit course. The plan can be modified by increasing or decreasing the number of days required when studying for exams in classes with higher or lower credit loads or where the amount of information required to be mastered is more or less than 4 major topics.

Steps:

1. Determine the amount of information you will need to know for the exam. It may be easier for you to think in terms of “chapters” covered in a text or “topics” covered in lecture. Make a list of those chapters or topics. How many are there? If there are four topics, a five day plan would be appropriate. If there are five topics, then create a six day plan. Six topics requires a seven day plan, etc. The idea is that there should be one more day than there are topics.

   (Number of days = number of “chapters” or “topics” plus one.)

2. Use a calendar to mark the date when the exam will be given. Start counting backwards from that date for as many days as you need to prepare – 4, 5, 6, 7, etc. If there any days when you know you will not be able to study, skip over them in the counting process. On your calendar mark “Day 1”, “Day 2”, etc. until the last day is the day before the test date.

3. For each day except the last day, plan what active exam preparation strategies you will use to prepare information on that day’s topic. (See the Menu of Actual Tasks to Add to Your Study Plan for ideas regarding preparation and review strategies.)

4. The first day of the plan always involves preparation of the oldest material. This is because time has made this material less familiar to you than more recently learned material. Subsequent study days involve preparation of the next oldest material and review of the material created up to that point. The last day is always reserved for overall review.

5. The last step is to write out your plan for each exam and put it into action.

The benefits of this study plan are that it is task-oriented, emphasizes self-testing and repetition, provides an integrated approach to learning, and avoids cramming. It will also help reduce stress and test anxiety.